

Questions from Claimants

Episode 9 – Filing an initial claim and general eligibility

Hello there and welcome to *Questions from Claimants*, the podcast about all things unemployment. Each episode we'll speak with unemployment experts from the Kansas Department of Labor to help answer your questions about your benefits. I'm your host Jonathan Larance.

In this episode of *Questions from Claimants*, we're talking about how to file an initial application and the general eligibility requirements needed to qualify for unemployment benefits. To get your questions answered I spoke with Chastity Dexter, a Public Service Administrator for the Kansas Department of Labor.

Jonathan: Chastity, thanks for joining me today.

Chastity: Sure.

Jonathan: Now Chastity, how do I go about filing for unemployment?

Chastity: Well, if you have never filed for unemployment before, or it has been more than a year since you last received any benefits, you need to file what is known as an initial claim. The fastest way to do that is online at www.GetKansasBenefits.com; you can also file by phone by calling our unemployment call center.

Jonathan: So I'm filing for my initial claim, what information will I need before I start filing?

Chastity: You will be asked for your Social Security number; your full mailing address, including apartment or lot number, your zip code and P.O. Box if you have one; a phone number where you can be reached during the day; the name and mailing address of all your employers in the last 18 months, no matter how long you worked there. Your paycheck stub or W-2 form usually contains this information. You'll need the date you started and stopped work for each of these employers and the reason you left those jobs; the county in which you live and your driver's license number.

Jonathan: Now Chastity, if I'm filing and I have a special circumstances like I'm not a citizen, or I was in the military or even if I was a federal employees, will I need to provide anything else?

Chastity: If you are not a citizen or national of the United States, you'll need your employment authorization number and expiration date. If you were in the military during the past two years, we'll need a copy of your DD-214, and that will be the number four copy. If you are a federal employee, your Standard Form SF-50 or pay stub will be needed.

Jonathan: Okay, so I've got all my materials ready and I'm ready to file online, how do I do that?

Chastity: It's easy -- you just need to go to www.GetKansasBenefits.com and click on "Apply for unemployment benefits." Applying online is much faster than applying by phone. It is a secure site where you can enter your information online.

Jonathan: Chastity, I want to make sure that I am doing this right the first time; you know, I want to make sure I'm not making any mistakes. Do you have anything that helps me walk through this whole filing online process?

Chastity: We sure do. There is about a 10-minute video that you can watch that will help you understand how to complete the initial application. There is also a printable desk guide available online that will walk you through the application process. We also have a checklist you can print out that can help you make sure you are doing everything correct the first time. All of these options can be found at the "Apply for unemployment benefits" page at www.GetKansasBenefits.com.

Jonathan: Okay, so, let's say I want to file online because it's, you know, faster and everything, what if I don't have a computer or I don't have access to the internet at home.

Chastity: Well, if you don't have a computer, you should check with your local library or school. Many have computers that you can use and people there can help you get online. We've also worked with the Department of Commerce to install computers in workforce centers in Kansas City, Overland Park, Topeka and Wichita so that the claimants can file unemployment applications online. There are Department of Labor employees at those centers to assist you in filing your application.

Jonathan: What, what if I just want to file by phone. What will be different from filing by phone than by filing online?

Chastity: Filing by phone isn't too much different. You will be asked the same questions whether you file online or by phone. When you file by phone, you will use the telephone keypad to answer your questions. You may also need to speak with a Contact Center representative to provide other information that can't be entered using the phone keypad.

Jonathan: So I've finished filing my initial application either online or by phone, what can I expect next?

Chastity: After you file your claim, you will receive an "Unemployment Insurance Monetary Determination." This letter is based on information we have on your past employment. This document includes the start date of your unemployment claim, the amount of wages reported by each employer, your base period, your weekly benefit amount and your total benefit amount.

Jonathan: What happens if I think my wages are incorrect and I want to dispute them?

Chastity: If you believe that wages on your determination letter are incorrect or you're missing information, just contact the Kansas Unemployment Contact Center for assistance. You will be asked to provide proof of the correct wages by supplying check stubs or a W-2 form. Without the proof, we may not be able to help you.

Jonathan: What things can cause me to be ineligible for unemployment benefits?

Chastity: You can be denied benefits if you have a medical condition that prevents you from seeking or accepting full-time work, if you are not available to seek or accept work immediately, if you are involved in a strike or are self-employed. There are other things that can prevent you from receiving unemployment benefits and a full list of those reasons are available at our Web

site [GetKansasBenefits.com](http://www.GetKansasBenefits.com) under the Eligibility and Disqualifications section in the Frequently Asked Questions.

Jonathan: So if I have any questions about filing for my initial claim what should I do? Should I call the Contact Center?

Chastity: You certainly can call the Contact Center if you feel you need to, but all the information that you need to apply, along with the information about the entire unemployment process, is available online at www.GetKansasBenefits.com.

Jonathan: Chastity, thanks for sitting down today and talking with me.

Chastity: You're welcome.

That's it for this episode of *Questions from Claimants*. Join us next time when we'll answer questions about the new alternative base period.

If you have general questions about the Kansas unemployment process, e-mail us at podcast@dol.ks.gov. For security reasons, we can't answer specific questions about your claim, but we may be able to answer general questions in an upcoming episode. Also, remember to go online to www.GetKansasBenefits.com for more information.

I'm Jonathan Larance. Thanks for listening.